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Anti-Imperialist Pamphleteering: Understanding Global Jihad in Wartime India, 1914-1918

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ABSTRACT
In 1914, the German Foreign Office envisaged a plan to stir up the subject populations of Britain, France and Russia. Colonial Muslims had a critical place in this plan, as contemporary Orientalist thought made the Germans believe these Muslims could easily be encouraged to rebel by a call for Jihad. In particular, the German Foreign Office believed Indian Muslims to be a disgruntled section of a subject population. The German government launched a campaign to spread jihadi propaganda to incite them into rebellion against the British imperial government. This Research Note contextualises the jihadi propaganda disseminated in India, in the broader transnational network of the German 'programme for insurrection'. It also examines how it exploited the old Wahabi network for this purpose.

Introduction

Shortly after the Ottoman empire joined the Great War, the Shaikh-ul Islam, on behalf of the Ottoman Caliph, declared *Jihad* or holy war against the Entente powers.[1] 'Turkish newspapers, containing facsimiles of five fatwas, circulated the proclamation all over the country.[2] Muslims all over the world, it was presumed, would then rise up against Christian domination by European colonisers. However, for the Ottomans the use of *Jihad* was not a novel weapon to rally Muslim subjects as they had issued official Jihad declarations (fatwa) on at least four occasions between 1768 and 1914 and a further two before 1922.[3] This came from the belief that only by embarking on *Jihad*

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[1]The Shaikh-ul Islam was the highest ranking religious dignitary under the Ottomans.
[2]James Campbell Kerr, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917,* (Calcutta: Editions India, 1960), p.271.
[3]Mustafa Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad' in Erik Jan Zürcher (ed), *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck*

could Muslims be victorious as the call for holy war would unite them through the bond of Muslim brotherhood. Nevertheless, there was a debate around the origin of this declaration of *Jihad* as some scholars perceived it to be the handiwork of Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II indeed wanted to profit from the mobilisation of colonised Muslims in support of German war interests. However, it was apparent that despite this strong German support, the Ottoman government embarked on this war on its own account.

The formation of the Triple Entente in the late nineteenth century deepened the anxiety of the Kaiser. Prior to the Great War, Germany envisaged a new policy – namely '*Aufweigelung*' or the *'insurrection strategy*'. With this policy, they wanted to spark rebellion among the subject peoples of Britain, France and Russia. The targeted peoples included Poles, Finns, Georgians, Armenians, Serbs, Irish, Jews, Estonians and Latvians.[4] In this global plan of stirring up colonised peoples into anti-colonial resistance, Muslims held a special position. The German Foreign Office was aware that if the Ottoman Caliph called for a holy war, Muslims across the world might be prepared to fight for what Europeans perceived to be 'Islam' and 'such readiness to fight might be harnessed in the service of one of the warring camps.'[5] Consequently, an agreement was signed between the Kaiser and the Ottoman emperor on 2 August 1914. While the Ottomans agreed upon instigating rebellion amongst the Muslim subjects of the Entente powers, Germany gave the Ottomans an assurance it would protect them against any future attack by the Entente.

There were two objectives of this 'Insurrection strategy': the first was to mobilise colonial Muslim soldiers and open new theatres of combat, thus drawing Entente troops away from the Western Front battlefields; the second, was to spread unrest among Muslim civilians and destabilise established colonial governments. To achieve these aims, the German Foreign Office started their Jihad propaganda campaign. Initially, Max Von Oppenheim, a Jewish Orientalist and archaeologist, who had spent more than eleven years in Egypt, began producing anti-Entente Jihadi propaganda.

India played a pivotal role in the broader German war strategy. Many German officers and consuls had visited India before the First World War to gain an understanding of the British rule in India.[6] They were aware that if Britain were to lose India, it would weaken its international position. Therefore, they specifically targeted Indian Muslims as a potential rebellious group inside India. The German government quickly

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Hurgonje's 'Holy War Made in Germany', (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), p. 53-70

[4]Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, *Vol.1*, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 698.

[5]Tilman Lüdke, 'Not Using Political Islam' in *Jihad and Islam in World War I*, p. 72-94.

[6]Lieutenant Von Schweinitz of the First Prussian Foot Guards visited the Indian Army stationed at Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Khyber during the pre-war period.

discovered that they could also exploit the grievances of Hindu revolutionaries who were already engaged in revolutionary campaigns against the British Raj.[7] They immediately contacted Indian revolutionaries outside India to incorporate them into the *Aufweigelung* strategy. It was agreed that the revolutionaries would organise a nationwide uprising in India; and also try to gain the assistance of sepoys in the British Indian Army.[8] In return the German government agreed to supply arms and money for this work. It was at this juncture that Germany contacted the *Ghadr* revolutionaries, based in San Francisco, and arranged with them to send arms to India[9]. The *Ghadr* revolutionaries then sent their agents to the Punjab and Bengal with the aim of spreading the word of 'revolution' to their comrades. While *ghadr* revolutionaries were spreading that news among the north Indian revolutionaries, agents of the Indian Independence Committee (Berlin) incorporated fellow revolutionaries in Bengal into the German plan. So began the large-scale preparation for a war of independence within India by mobilising anti-British Indian revolutionaries, as well as other revolutionaries all over the world.

The situation in India in 1914 was conducive to violent revolt and rebellion.[10] Meanwhile, Jihadi propaganda, published by *the Information Bureau of the East*, started

[7]From the late nineteenth century, a group of Hindu revolutionaries started to resist the oppression of the British government. Albeit it began with the murder of Plague Commissioner, Mr. Rand, soon revolutionaries started to organise themselves into secret samitis (societies). From 1905 the Bengal police reported outrages perpetrated by the Hindu revolutionaries. They participated in the 1905 anti-partition movement, which had been spurred on by the British Viceroy Lord Curzon's Partition of Bengal. Hence, it seems there was a large section of the young population of India who held extremist views and would engage in anti-British uprisings.

[8]The Indian Army consisted of a large number of Indian soldiers with British officers as well as some British regiments. British Imperial power in India rested on the prowess and loyalty of these soldiers, so revolutionaries tried to persuade the Indian troops to abandon British service and join them in the struggle for Indian Independence. In this way, the revolutionaries aimed to weaken the powerbase of the British in the subcontinent. Indeed, the Indian revolutionaries were inspired by the bravery shown by the sepoys in the 1857 rebellion, however, in this context whether the revolutionaries wanted to directly imitate the 1857 rebellion is uncertain.

[9]Bhupendra Nath Dutta, *Aprakishito Rajnaitik Itihas*, (Calcutta, Barman Publishing House, 1954), p. 5

[10]A number of revolutionaries who were involved in this programme talked about an atmosphere of revolt in India at that time. They described the ways in which samitis, or political organisations, in Bengal were secretly organising themselves. See Dutta, *Aprakishito Rajnaitik Itihas*; Satish Pakrashi, *Agnidiner Kotha*, (Calcutta, National Book

to circulate among Indian Muslims, inciting them to rise against the British. Jihadi Pamphlets, found in India, reflect this global plan for stoking rebellion. Studying these pamphlets illuminates an underrepresented aspect of the First World War by shifting the focus from the trenches of Western European battlefields to understanding it as a war fought by way of stoking a community's religious sentiment. The pamphlets bear testimony to the careful German machinations by which they tried to manipulate colonised Muslims. This note contends that analysis of these leaflets contributes to broader debates on the far reaching and globalised nature of the First World War. Furthermore, the Jihadi propagandists used the old Wahabi network in India to reach the inner strata of Muslim society. In the emergent trend of rewriting the history of the First World War, this study adds a novel perspective in unfolding the global extent of that war.

Role of the Indian Muslims in *Aufweigelung*:

In India, a group of Muslim political activists, largely from the Deoband school, responded to the call. Obeidullah Shindhi, a Moulvi of Deoband, who aspired to create a Muslim rebellion in India, crossed the border and went to Afghanistan.[11] He reached Kabul in mid-1915 where he met with the Indo-German group headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap. Meanwhile, Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan, one of Obeidullah's disciples, travelled to Istanbul and conferred with Ghalib Pasha. Ghalib Pasha handed over a copy of the fatwa urging the *mujahidins*[12] in the North-West Frontier province to join forces with the Indian Muslim activists. While on his way, Muhammad Mian, a Deoband friend of Obeidullah, who accompanied Mahmud al-Hasan, distributed copies of this fatwa, known as "Ghalibnama" both in India and among the frontier tribes.[13]

The German Foreign office despatched numerous missions to the Middle East to rally Indian soldiers against the British. Attempts were also made to form a regiment out

Agency Ltd., 1947); Nalini Kishor Guha, *Banglay Biplobbad*, (Calcutta, A Mukherjee & Co. 1923).

[11]The Deoband School was established in 1867 at Deoband, United Provinces, and followed Wahabism as a religious doctrine. Though, it was built to impart education on Islamic Law, its main aim was to preserve Islamic learning during colonial rule. In the early, twentieth century it was notorious for preaching anti-British sentiment among its students.

[12]The term mujahidin means a person who fights in a Jihad on behalf of Islam. The Sedition Committee Report 1918, (Calcutta: New Age Publishers, 1973), p174, stated, 'in independent territory across the border of the NWFP there is a small colony of Hindustani fanatics, who go by the name of Mujahidin. The colony was found by Syed Ahmad Shah, a fervent apostle in India of the Wahabi sect.'

[13]Sedition Committee Report, p. 177. Ghalibnama, which literally means the book of Ghalib, contains the religious decree proclaimed by the Ottoman Caliph in 1914.

of the Indian Army soldiers imprisoned in Turkey, but this scheme failed, and it was alleged that this failure was due to growing hostility between the captive Hindu and Muslim soldiers. Hostility engendered by the partiality shown to the latter by the Turks.[14]

Meanwhile, Raja Mahendra Pratap, who had left India in December 1914, travelled to Geneva and met Har Dayal, the leader of Ghadr party in America.[15] Later Har Dayal accompanied him to Berlin where he had an interview with the Kaiser. Raja Mahendra Pratap was promised he would receive every assistance needed to free his country. Soon he was despatched on a mission to Kabul. Baraktulla, another *ghadarite*, also accompanied him on this mission, along with Dr von Hentig of the German Diplomatic Service.[16] Their agenda was to attack India from the North-West with the help of the Amir of Afghanistan. The mission reached Kabul on 2 October 1915 and met the Indian Muslim activists there who were willing to form an allegiance with them. On 1 December 1915 they established the 'Provisional Government of India in Kabul'. The Sedition Committee reported, 'Obeidullah and his fellow conspirators had devised a scheme for the provisional government of India after the overthrow of the British power.'[17]

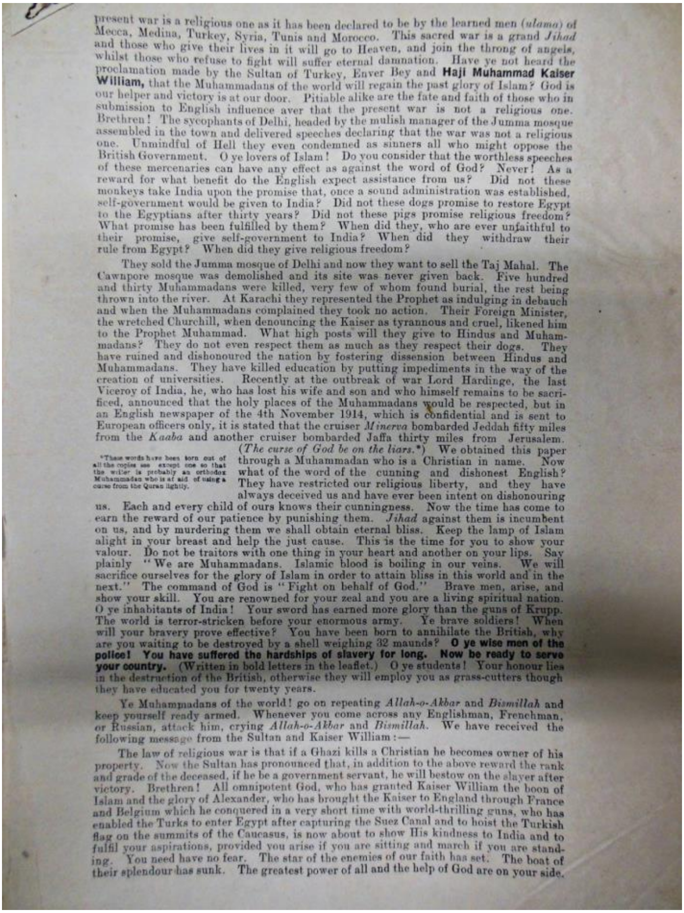
This plan was foiled due to the last- minute betrayal of the Amir of Afghanistan, so the German envoys returned to Berlin. Moreover, surveillance by British spies over a large part of the Middle East soon proved fatal to this group. Nevertheless, and despite the early demise of the plan, German consuls along with Indian Muslim activists were able to spread propaganda. This is corroborated by a statement reported by James Campbell Kerr, when he stated, 'One of the leaders of anti-British plotting in Persia was Herr Wassmuss, the German Consul at Bushire, he was arrested in early 1915, and among his effects were found several copies of five different leaflets intended for Indian consumption, of which one was in English, two in Urdu, one in Hindi, and one in Marathi.'[18] However, jihadi propaganda was not limited to pamphlets, a number of newspapers were also involved in promoting the cause of *Jihad* among Indian Muslims

[14]R.C.Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement of India*, Vol. II, (Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyaya, 1963), p. 405.
[15]Raja Mahendra Pratap was a descendant of the royal family of Hathora. He was a nationalist and joined a session of the Indian National Congress in 1906. He spent most of his life abroad, fighting for India's Independence. He returned to India in 1946.
[16]The members of the ghadr party were known as ghadarite, Baraktullah was one of them. He was intrinsically related to the Insurrection plan inside India.
[17]Sedition Committee Report, p.177
[18]Kerr, *Political Trouble in India*, p. 273.

at that time. Punjabi Abu Said el Arabi was engaged in propagating the fatwa of *Jihad* by way of writing articles in newspapers, named *jehan-I Islam.*[19]

Jihad through pamphlets

Pamphlets and leaflets proclaiming *Jihad* started to appear in India prior to the outbreak of the war. A number of pamphlets were also imported from Constantinople during this time. The pamphlet shown in (Figure 1) below appeared in India immediately after the outbreak of the war.



present war is a religious one as it has been declared to be by the learned men (*ulama*) of Mecca, Medina, Turkey, Syria, Tunis and Morocco. This sacred war is a grand *Jihad* and those who give their lives in it will go to Heaven, and join the throng of angels, whilst those who refuse to fight will suffer eternal damnation. Have ye not heard the proclamation made by the Sultan of Turkey, Enver Bey and **Haji Muhammad Kaiser William,** that the Muhammadans of the world will regain the past glory of Islam? God is our helper and victory is at our door. Pitiable alike are the fate and faith of those who in submission to English influence aver that the present war is not a religious one. Brethren! The sycophants of Delhi, headed by the mulish manager of the Jumma mosque assembled in the town and delivered speeches declaring that the war was not a religious one. Unmindful of Hell they even condemned as sinners all who might oppose the British Government. O ye lovers of Islam! Do you consider that the worthless speeches of these mercenaries can have any effect as against the word of God? Never! As a reward for what benefit do the English expect assistance from us? Did not these monkeys take India upon the promise that, once a sound administration was established, self-government would be given to India? Did not these dogs promise to restore Egypt to the Egyptians after thirty years? Did not these pigs promise religious freedom? What promise has been fulfilled by them? When did they, who are ever unfaithful to their promise, give self-government to India? When did they withdraw their rule from Egypt? When did they give religious freedom?

They sold the Jumma mosque of Delhi and now they want to sell the Taj Mahal. The Cawnpore mosque was demolished and its site was never given back. Five hundred and thirty Muhammadans were killed, very few of whom found burial, the rest being thrown into the river. At Karachi they represented the Prophet as indulging in debauch and when the Muhammadans complained they took no action. Their Foreign Minister, the wretched Churchill, when denouncing the Kaiser as tyrannous and cruel, likened him to the Prophet Muhammad. What high posts will they give to Hindus and Muhammadans? They do not even respect them as much as they respect their dogs. They have ruined and dishonoured the nation by fostering dissension between Hindus and Muhammadans. They have killed education by putting impediments in the way of the creation of universities. Recently at the outbreak of war Lord Hardinge, the last Viceroy of India, he, who has lost his wife and son and who himself remains to be sacrificed, announced that the holy places of the Muhammadans would be respected, but in an English newspaper of the 4th November 1914, which is confidential and is sent to European officers only, it is stated that the cruiser *Minerva* bombarded Jeddah fifty miles from the *Kaaba* and another cruiser bombarded Jaffa thirty miles from Jerusalem. (*The curse of God be on the liars.**) We obtained this paper through a Muhammadan who is a Christian in name. Now what of the word of the cunning and dishonest English? They have restricted our religious liberty, and they have always deceived us and have ever been intent on dishonouring us. Each and every child of ours knows their cunningness. Now the time has come to earn the reward of our patience by punishing them. *Jihad* against them is incumbent on us, and by murdering them we shall obtain eternal bliss. Keep the lamp of Islam alight in your breast and help the just cause. This is the time for you to show your valour. Do not be traitors with one thing in your heart and another on your lips. Say plainly "We are Muhammadans. Islamic blood is boiling in our veins. We will sacrifice ourselves for the glory of Islam in order to attain bliss in this world and in the next." The command of God is "Fight on behalf of God." Brave men, arise, and show your skill. You are renowned for your zeal and you are a living spiritual nation. O ye inhabitants of India! Your sword has earned more glory than the guns of Krupp. The world is terror-stricken before your enormous army. Ye brave soldiers! When will your bravery prove effective? You have been born to annihilate the British, why are you waiting to be destroyed by a shell weighing 32 maunds? **O ye wise men of the police! You have suffered the hardships of slavery for long. Now be ready to serve your country.** (Written in bold letters in the leaflet.) O ye students! Your honour lies in the destruction of the British, otherwise they will employ you as grass-cutters though they have educated you for twenty years.

*These words have been torn out of all the copies see except one so that the writer is probably an orthodox Muhammadan who is afraid of using a curse from the Quran lightly.

Ye Muhammadans of the world! go on repeating *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Bismillah* and keep yourself ready armed. Whenever you come across any Englishman, Frenchman, or Russian, attack him, crying *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Bismillah.* We have received the following message from the Sultan and Kaiser William:—

The law of religious war is that if a Ghazi kills a Christian he becomes owner of his property. Now the Sultan has pronounced that, in addition to the above reward the rank and grade of the deceased, if he be a government servant, he will bestow on the slayer after victory. Brethren! All omnipotent God, who has granted Kaiser William the boon of Islam and the glory of Alexander, who has brought the Kaiser to England through France and Belgium which he conquered in a very short time with world-thrilling guns, who has enabled the Turks to enter Egypt after capturing the Suez Canal and to hoist the Turkish flag on the summits of the Caucasus, is now about to show His kindness to India and to fulfil your aspirations, provided you arise if you are sitting and march if you are standing. You need have no fear. The star of the enemies of our faith has set. The boat of their splendour has sunk. The greatest power of all and the help of God are on your side.

Figure 1: Al-Inteqam.[20]

[19]Ibid.

[20] Leaflet al-Inteqam, IB Records, 1915, WBSA, FN-286/15

Police discovered a series of leaflets circulated in Lucknow in November 1914, and a copy of the third edition, entitled 'Al Inteqam' (The Revenge), was received by Waris Husain, an oil merchant in Fyzabad, which he gave to the Deputy Commissioner of Fyzabad. Furthermore, the police obtained two copies of the same pamphlet from the Moradabad district of the United Provinces. This leaflet was also circulated in Punjab and Lahore. The government of United Provinces (UP) banned this edition immediately. Furthermore, it was discovered that this leaflet had already been sent to the editor of the *Hindustan* newspaper in Delhi for publication in their daily, where the editor published it under the heading 'Al-Inteqam'.

In March 1915 the UP Police discovered another series of pamphlets, headed *Bagawat-i-Hindh.* (Revolt in India).[21] The first leaflet of this series was entitled 'Do Jehad [sic] in the path of God'. This was written in Urdu and was lithographed in bold letters. It was seditious in nature and was immediately banned by the UP government.

DO *jehad* IN THE PATH OF GOD.

Those Englishmen who have plundered India, have demolished temples and mosques and are sacrificing human beings at the docks (*bandaron par*) are now being destroyed by God. They are being punished for their atrocities and a chance is being offered for a revenge. *Jehad* is being made on them in Arabia and Turkey. It is the duty of all Hindus and Mussalmans to turn them out of their country. They will never get such another chance and will always be sorry and regret it (if not taken).

Figure 2: Do Jehad in the Path of God Leaflet.[22]

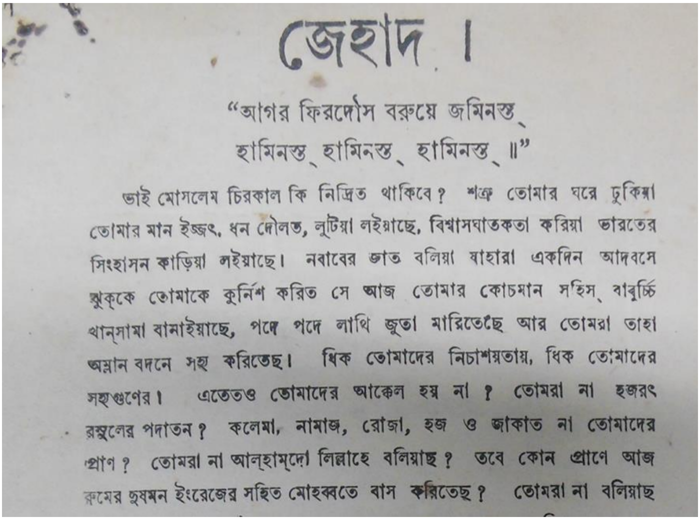
Whereas, according to the religious decrees of the famous *Ulamu* of the sacred Hedjaz and of Constantinople . . . This proclaims *jehad* between the Porte and certain powers. Therefore the sublime efforts of the ruler of the God-given Kingdom of Afghanistan are concentrated on setting the Indian soil free from the hands of England; so that the sovereignty of this country may pass into his hands. Accordingly it is announced hereby that whosoever will help the Afghan forces at that time of attack . . . Christians . . . will be awarded his adjoining lands according to the number he has killed or made prisoners. If otherwise, severe punishment will be inflicted. Therefore we forewarn and publish . . . when the aid and victory come from God myriads embrace the Divine religion . . .

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, AFGHAN FORCES.

Figure 3: Untitled pamphlet of Bagawat-i-Hind series.[23]

[21]Urdu leaflet Bagawat-i-Hind, 1915, IB Records, WBSA, FN-580/15.
[22]Urdu leaflet Bagawat-i-Hind, 1915, IB Records, WBSA, FN-580/15.
[23]Urdu leaflet Bagawat-i-Hind, 1915, IB Records, WBSA, FN-580/15

On 17 March 1915, and some two months after the proscription of the pamphlet 'Do jehad in the path of God', a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officer of the UP Police obtained a letter sent by a man from Rampur, UP, in which he said that he had searched for the *Baghawat-i-hind* leaflets and he had found a leaflet of that nature in Rampur.[24] The leaflet was in Persian, and was in the name of Muhammad Amin Khan, a Conservancy official (jamadar) who was mentioned in connection with its circulation in Rampur.[25] This officer suggested that some of the leaflets might be recovered from his (jamadar) house. After analysing the translation of the leaflet, the UP CID decided to proscribe the leaflet. Other local governments including the Bengal Government also proscribed it on 10 April 1915 under the Press Act, 1910.



জেহাদ।

"আগর ফিরদৌস বরুয়ে জমিনস্ত্
হামিনস্ত্ হামিনস্ত্ হামিনস্ত্ ॥"

ভাই মোসলেম চিরকাল কি নিদ্রিত থাকিবে? শত্রু তোমার ঘরে ঢুকিয়া তোমার মান ইজ্জৎ, ধন দৌলত, লুটিয়া লইয়াছে, বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা করিয়া ভারতের সিংহাসন কাড়িয়া লইয়াছে। নবাবের জাত বলিয়া যাহারা একদিন আদবসে ঝুক্‌কে তোমাকে কুর্নিশ করিত সে আজ তোমার কোচমান সহিস্ বাবুর্চ্চি খান্‌সামা বানাইয়াছে, পদে পদে লাথি জুতা মারিতেছে আর তোমরা তাহা অম্লান বদনে সহ্য করিতেছ। ধিক তোমাদের নিচাশয়তায়, ধিক তোমাদের সহ্যগুণের। এতেতও তোমাদের আক্কেল হয় না? তোমরা না হজরৎ রসুলের পদাতন? কলেমা, নামাজ, রোজা, হজ ও জাকাত না তোমাদের প্রাণ? তোমরা না আল্‌হাম্‌দো লিল্লাহে বলিয়াছ? তবে কোন প্রাণে আজ রুমের দুষমন ইংরেজের সহিত মোহব্বতে বাস করিতেছ? তোমরা না বলিয়াছ

Figure 4: Printed Bengali Jihad leaflet.[26]

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[24]Urdu leaflet Bagawat-i-Hind, 1915, IB Records, WBSA, FN-580/15.

[25]In nineteenth century India a Jamadar was supposed to be an armed official of a Zamindar (landlord). Later, it was a rank used in the British Indian Army where it became the lowest rank for a Viceroy's Commissioned Officer. They either commanded Indian troops themselves or assisted the British officers in overall command.

[26]Leaflet Jehad, WBSA, 1916, FN-2171/16. 'If there is Paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this. The enemy, having entered your home, is robbing you of honour, and of riches, and through treachery has snatched away the throne of India. They who once bent themselves with respect and made obeisance to you, as belonging to the race of nawabs, have now made coachmen, syces, baburchees (cooks), khansamas of you.

On 28 November 1916, it was found that a Bengali printed Jihad leaflet was widely circulating in Mymensingh town. Some copies of it were addressed to the editors of the *Basumati* and *Herald*, with the intention of getting it printed in those newspapers. However, the editors gave these leaflets to the local Police Superintendent as soon as they had received them. Due to its inflammatory and seditious nature, the leaflet was proscribed by the Provincial Government of Bengal in December 1916.[27]

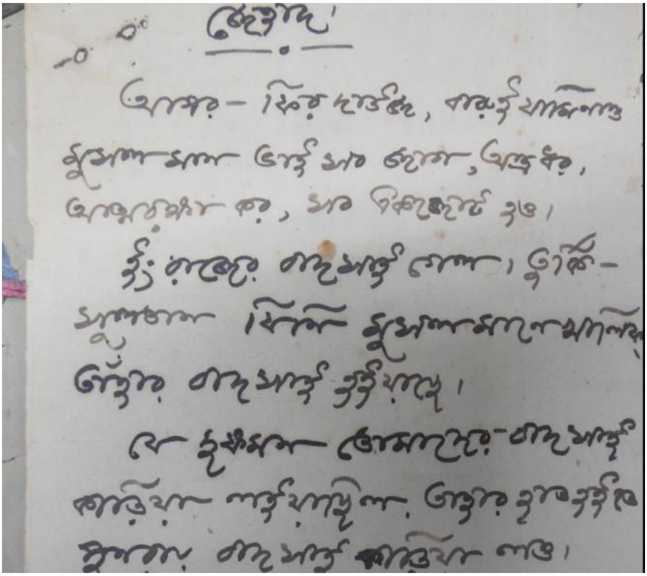


Figure 5: Bengali Manuscript Leaflet.[28]

They are kicking you at every step and you are doing nothing except enduring these without the slightest demur. Fie to your meanness, fie to your endurance. Does not even all these bring you to your senses? Are not you the soldiers of the Prophet? Are not you devoted to the Islamic religious rituals? Have then can you possibly live now in amity and friendship with the English who are the enemies of Roum (Ottomans).'

[27]Extract of Ananda Bazar Patrika: Another Bengali leaflet Proscribed, 1916, Leaflet Jehad, WBSA, FN-2171/16.

[28]Letter from S.I. Dinajpur, Leaflet Jihad (A Holy War), IB Records, 1916, WBSA, FN-2301/16. If there is paradise here on earth, it is this. It is this. It is this. Ye Muhammadan brothers-awake, arise, take arms, defend yourselves and all unite together. The Kingdom of Englishmen had gone. The Sultan of Turkey who is the Caliph of whole

Another Bengali manuscript Jihad leaflet was found to be circulating in Dinajpur at the same time. One copy of was addressed to the Sub Inspector of Dinajpur. A similar manuscript was also delivered to Moulvi Yukumuddin, a leading Muhammadan cleric of Dinajpur.[29]

Analysis of the Content of the Leaflets and Pamphlets

The 'Al-Inteqam' leaflet (Figure 1) was written in Urdu and was edited by Moulvi Abul Inteqam and had been widely distributed in some district towns of the United Provinces such as Cawnpore, Lucknow and Fatehpur by February 1915. It is a call for revenge against the British rulers of India. Describing how the Muslims of the world had faced butchery at the hands of them, it condemns the 'British' as one who breached the promise to restore Egypt to the Egyptians and pledged to give religious freedom to Indian Muslims but did not fulfil it. The leaflet says the British rulers were the culprit who instigated dissension between Hindus and Muslims. It further warned the readers that in India, it was futile to expect they would give them important posts in Government offices as they treat both like dogs. This pamphlet further vilifies the British by saying in spite of, Lord Harding's promise of not harming the holy places of Islam, they had bombarded Jeddah and Jaffa. It also refers to the riot in the Kanpur Mosque. Now the time had arrived for taking revenge for all the injustices they had to bear with. This pamphlet, further, enumerates the many grievances of the Muslim subjects of British India, as it refers to the Kanpur Mosque incident in which an (uncertain) number of Muslims had died.

It also addresses the long-term demands put forward by the Indian National Congress, namely the demand for Indian self-government. Referring to the inaction of the British Raj in granting religious freedom to the Muslims, it tries to stir them up by saying that they had been oppressed at the hands of the British for too long. The importation of western education was also criticised here. By doing this, it affirmed that although the students had degrees, they would not get jobs while the British ruled because the British wanted to use them as slaves. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Muslims to root the British out of India. It further strengthens their point that they should help the Germans to destroy British rule in India. By doing so it tries not only to stoke the grievances of an already discontented section of the Muslim population but it also tries to mobilise them to push out the British.

The Sultan of Turkey (Mehmed V), Enver Bey, Haji Muhammad, and the German Kaiser

Muhammadan world became king. The enemy who snatched away the kingdom from our hands is now in distress, so now snatch away the monarchy from their hands.

[29]Letter from S.I. Dinajpur, Leaflet – Jehad – (A Holy War), IB Records, WBSA, FN-2301/16.

Wilhelm all proclaimed *Jihad* against the Entente powers in the First World War. This leaflet is unique for its impassioned appeal to the soldiers, policemen and students in India to take part in a religious war to protect their motherland instead of being slaves at the hands of the British. Particularly interesting was that part of the leaflet suggesting that the Police force should play an important role in this *Jihad*. At this juncture, the intention to link their cause to the nationalist struggle was visibly present in this writing.

The Do Jehad in the Path of God leaflet, (Figure 2) is an Urdu leaflet that was found to be circulated in UP in March 1915. It advocated the cause of Jihad by labelling it as a God-led path of salvation. By claiming that Indian Muslims were now ready to forge an alliance with Hindus to fight against the British in India, it tried to invoke Hindu nationalist sentiment by portraying 'the Englishman' as the 'destroyer of temples' as well as mosques. Hence, framing the British as the 'plunderer' of India, the pamphlet argued that the British empire's weakened position in the war should be exploited by both Hindus and Muslims in India.

The leaflet signed by the Commander-in-Chief Afghan Forces, (Figure 3) was received by a Conservancy officer (Jamadar) in Rampur. It addresses in more detail the role of Afghanistan in the broader German 'programme for insurrection'. Without directly propagating the *fatwa*, it hinted at it. By proclaiming the news that the ruler of Afghanistan was going to attack India, it revealed the plan, hatched by the Germans. It urged that Indian Muslims should join forces with Afghans as soon as they attacked India. This pamphlet further validated the point that the propagators were aware of the plan hatched by the so-called Silk Letter Conspirators, and the Indo-German mission based in Kabul.[30] Intriguingly, this pamphlet tried to enrol Indian Muslims in their plan by announcing that whoever helped the Afghan forces in killing Christians would be awarded adjoining lands according to the number he killed or took prisoner. This pamphlet said it was obligatory for Indian Muslims to join and support the Afghan forces.

The Jihadi Leaflet in Mymensingh (Figure 4) reveals the collaboration of Hindu revolutionaries and the Germans to create a nationwide uprising in India. It begins with the famous couplet by Amir Khusrau which says, 'If there is a heaven on earth,

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[30]The aims of the Silk Letter Conspirators were to attack Delhi from the North-West Frontier and foment a Muslim rising in the country as a whole. The conspirators were named after British Police got hold of some silk handkerchiefs used to pass messages. Obeidullah Shindhi, in an effort to contact Maulana Muhammad Ansari and Maulana al-Hasan, had written three letters which were to reach Mecca from Kabul by a circuitous route. Instead of reaching Sheikh Abdul Rahim in Sindh, they fell into the hands of Rab Nawaz Khan, a British Police Officer stationed at Multan.

this is it', and it ends with the words 'La Elaha Il Lillahu Mahammader Rasul Lillah' (save Allah there is no God and Muhammad is his Prophet). This pamphlet also affirmed that Bengali (Hindu) revolutionaries were already prepared to join the Muslims.[31] It promoted the idea that with the help of Hindus, Indian Muslims could win this war by driving the British out of India. Notably, this pamphlet, also invited Hindus, forgiving all the past animosity with their 'brother' Muslims to join the war. Thus, it stated, with their spontaneous participation victory over the British could be achieved. This pamphlet declared that Enver Pasha along with the Amir of Kabul and Persia would soon invade India. Muslims all over the country, therefore, should unleash a reign of terror on the British, through pillage, arson and looting. Furthermore, this pamphlet addressed the perceived plan of the German Foreign Office to attack Delhi from Kabul. *'Ekhon tomadigok bolitechi j, Rum er loskor loiya Anwar Pasha bharate asitechen, Parosyo jog diyache, Kabul er amir jog debe thik hoia giache, purbo hoite sekarone Pesware lorai badhia giyache.*'[32] (Persia had joined in, and it has been settled that the Amir of Kabul also will join in, for that reason fighting has begun in anticipation in Peshawar).[33]

The Jihadi Leaflet in Dinajpur (Figure 5) also invited Indian Muslims to rise and join the holy war. The instigator tried to stir up Muslims by awakening their suppressed sentiment by indicating that they were once rulers of the land. It provoked Indian (Bengali) Muslims by saying there might be a chance that the now-fallen condition of the Muslims of India would be uplifted if they could drive the British out from their country. It proclaimed that an opportunity had arrived in which they could fight to take power from those hands which, had once, snatched their power from their hands. As Turkey was becoming powerful, they could crush the British easily in this war, and the Muslims of India could regain their lost empire.

How did the Jihadi propaganda reach its audience?

In all of the above cases, Police and Intelligence Branch (IB) officers could not trace the persons who were involved in the production of the propaganda, because they were sent by post or were pasted on the walls in conspicuous places by elusive figures. Consequently, they initially evaded the notice of the Police. Also, it seems that the Jihadi propagandists specifically targeted Muslims living in UP, NWFP and Bengal. This was not only for their being Muslim majority provinces, but also for their active roles in the Wahabi movement. British Police and IB officers knew that although many Indian

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[31]Bengali revolutionaries thought an invasion from Afghanistan, accompanied by a Muslim rebellion, would help them make India free. With the establishment of the Indian Independence committee in Berlin, Bengali revolutionaries became associated with the global Hindu-German conspiracy.

[32]Leaflet- Jehad - Holy War, 1916, IB Records, WBSA, FN-2301/16

[33]Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal: Extremist and Militant Press, 1905-1918,* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 2008), p. 280.

Muslims formed a loyal class from a British perspective, there might exist a recalcitrant element who would respond to the Jihad call. Tilman Lüdke has rightly suggested that the Muslim colonial populations were regarded with a great deal of apprehension.[34] Therefore, the British IB officers were always cautious and tried to prevent the circulation of *Jihadi* propaganda.

During 1914, in connection with the dissemination of a Persian pamphlet issued by the Red Crescent Society of Constantinople, Bengal IB officers reviewed some old files and found that a branch of the Red Crescent Society had been working in Cuttuck since around 1912. They further discovered that there was within India a complex and wide network forged by zealous Muslims who were sympathetic to the cause of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, it seems that this group of people and their existing network within India were being exploited by the agents of the 'Programme for Insurrection'. The Sedition Committee Report, by affirming the existence of this kind of network, stated that 'it brings to the surface secret and long forgotten currents forged during [the] 1870s.'[35] In this connection, it also referred to a relatable case, which was cited from William Hunter's book 'Our Indian Mussalmans' where he indicated the existence of a network of conspiracy among the Muslims which had kept the British administration engaged since the 1870s.[36]

Exploring, the content of this propaganda and its distribution pattern highlights the intricate networks of the insurgents and their reliance in some cases on older hubs of revolution in Central India, the North-West frontier and Eastern Bengal provinces. Lucknow and Mymensingh were both important centres during the 1857 Indian Rebellion and for the Wahabi movement. The pan-Islamists (and insurrection strategists) who wanted to wage anti-British war by inciting Muslim brethren in India relied on their old connections and networks. This was seen in the distribution of pamphlets by, and among, the hide merchants and oil merchants of the United Provinces.[37] This class of people was the targeted audience of the Jihadi propagandists because they worked as money bearers and creditors of the *mujahideens* within the nineteenth century Wahabi movement.

This was further corroborated by three discoveries. The first was in January 1917, when it was discovered that a party of eight Muslims had joined the *Mujahidin* from the districts of Rangpur and Dacca in Eastern Bengal. The second was the arrest of two Bengali Muslims in March 1917, in the NWFP with Rs. 8000 in their possession which they were conveying to support the activists of the Wahabi movement. The

[34]Lüdke, 'Not Using Political Islam', pp. 71-94

[35]Sedition Committee Report, p. 175.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Is seen in the case of the distribution pattern of the pamphlet headed 'Al-Inteqam'.

third was the flight of fifteen students from Lahore who joined the *Mujahidin* and then travelled to Kabul to join the Afghan army and wage jihad.[38]

It was in this context that Bengal and UP emerged as the hubs of disgruntled Muslim sympathisers whose Pan-Islamic sentiment could easily be stirred up. The German Foreign office, with the help of the Ottoman Empire, exploited the networks of dissident Muslims who were already prepared to wage war against the British.

Conclusion

In almost all the pamphlets, the firm belief in the victory of the Central Powers over the Entente Powers was reiterated. Moreover, these pamphlets portrayed the First World War as a religious war and addressed the Muslims of the world to take revenge for the sufferings that they had to undergo in previous wars. At the same time, they argued that Islam was under attack, so it was now incumbent among Muslims to attack the enemy. Thus, this propaganda was a deliberate attempt to arouse the religious sentiment of the Muslims by inviting them to participate in this war. However, as the reading of this propaganda reflects, the propagator wanted to legitimise the call for violence by invoking it as a religious war. Intriguingly, they portrayed the Christian Germans as their friends while other Christian Entente powers were framed as enemies of Islam.

Contrary to the Jihad propaganda spread in Anatolia by the Ottomans, in India these pamphlets were targeted at the civilian population rather than at Indian Army soldiers.[39] It further aimed for the readers to participate in Jihad by way of joining the invading force of Afghans. The Kabul mission's plan was for Afghan forces to attack Delhi from the North-West Frontier with Indian Muslims urged to join in and assist the attackers.

Approaching the question of propaganda also forces us to look into a vital question – the problem of literacy. The 1911 census suggests that less than 11% of the male population of India was literate at that time. This figure denotes literacy in both English and vernacular languages. While we should note that it was common at the time for illiterate Hindus to be able to recite familiar parts of the Mahabharata, and as the 1911 Census put it, 'there are many Muhammadans, especially in Northern India, who can

[38]Sedition Committee Report, p. 178.

[39]Mehmet Beşikçi, 'Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad: The Role of Religious Motifs and Religious Agents in the Mobilization of the Ottoman Army' in *Jihad and Islam in World War I,* pp.95-116; The UK's Guardian newspaper 12 November 2017 states that some 1.3 million Indians went to war fronts across the world, and that around 400,000 of them were Muslim. They were a natural target for Jihad propaganda.

read the Koran, though they cannot write a word.'[40] How then could Jihadi propaganda reach its overwhelmingly illiterate audience? Here, the role of oral transmission of messages must be appreciated. Nevertheless, a section of Indian Muslims was already conducive to the idea of *Jihad*, although a large section of Indian Muslims remained loyal to the British crown. It was due to one of the loyal Muslims that the Silk Letter Conspirators were caught, leading to the demise of the German plan.

In spite of all the efforts of the propagandists, they failed to stir up either the Hindu population or the Muslim population of India. This attempt to merge a pan-Islamist cause with the Indian nationalist cause was a failure.

[40]Census of India 1911, Vol-1, (Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, 1913), p. 291.